

Assam's Hailakandi District. There were also Common Sandpipers *Actitis hypoleucos* and Little Ringed Plovers *Charadrius dubius* en route, and high up in the sky were several migrating Amur Falcons *Falco amurensis*. I did not make any attempt to identify the waders from the fast-moving boat, but took photographs. A few years later, while checking some photos, I came across this one, a very conspicuous Green Sandpiper, hitherto unreported from Mizoram [77]. The less distinct spots on its upperparts, shorter greenish legs, tail not projecting beyond closed wings, and somewhat larger size, eliminated both, the Wood Sandpiper *T. glareola*, and the Common Sandpiper.



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77. Green Sandpiper in Mizoram, India.

The species has been recorded across the border in Assam, Manipur, Tripura, Bangladesh, and Myanmar, but not near the border as the nearby areas of these countries and states are hilly and mountainous. The bird might be a regular, but scarce, passage migrant along the streams and rivers, which are not accessible to many birdwatchers in Mizoram.

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### Black-capped Kingfisher *Halcyon pileata* from Dibang Valley, Arunachal Pradesh, and its status in north-eastern India

The Black-capped Kingfisher *Halcyon pileata* is known to predominantly inhabit coastal habitats. Vagrants have been found

inland upto c.1,600 m from the coast, landing there, presumably, due to unfavourable rainfall patterns—amongst other factors (Rasmussen & Anderton 2012; Woodall & Kirwan 2020).

We encountered single birds on two separate days [78] whilst carrying out our routine bird survey (Mohanty 2018a,b; WII 2019). On both occasions, the bird was readily identified by its black cap (or head) and shoulders, purple-blue wings, and its other identifiable features that include a rufous underbelly, white collar and neck (Grimmett et al. 2011).



L: Sumit Aya, R: Arundhati Mohanty

78. Black-capped Kingfisher from Dibang Valley, Arunachal Pradesh.

Our first sighting on the 13 May 2018, was at 0730h. The bird was perched in the lower canopy of a tree in Dus Kilo village (28.63°N, 95.94°E; 894 m asl) and was actively feeding at the time. The second sighting was at 1100h on the 15 May 2018 wherein the kingfisher was perched on a powerline near Atunli Village (28.66°N, 96.03°E; 1,127 m asl).

The aerial distance between the two locations is nine kilometers, and both are in close proximity to the Tangon River. Peak summer, when the birds were seen, is also their breeding season in India (Fry & Fry 2010).

The inland occurrence of this bird is sparsely recorded throughout the Indian Subcontinent with a majority of the records being from the central Indian states. We reviewed all its historical, and contemporary records from north-eastern India, primarily using the eBird range map, and subsequently delving into published records (Fig. 1). We found that it has been recorded as an occasional visitor/vagrant to the north-eastern states known as the seven-sisters (Table 1).

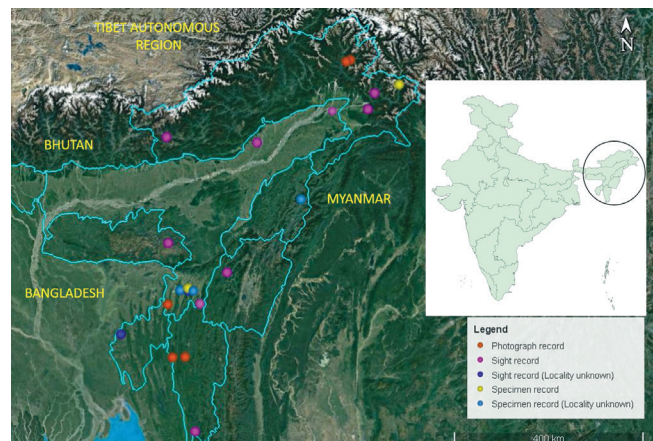


Fig. 1. Past and present records of the Black-capped Kingfisher from north-eastern India. [The boundaries depicted in the map are only for illustration, and may not be accurate.]

**Table 1.** Records of Black-capped Kingfisher from north-eastern India, listed state-wise and chronologically

State	District	Locality	Month	Year	Type	Reference/Notes
<b>Arunachal Pradesh*</b>	West Kameng	Foothills Range headquarters	April	1991	O	Singh (1995)
	Anjaw	Hotspring	September	1991	S	Purportedly killed locally at 3,300m (Singh 1995), which is probably an altitude record for India, though it has been reported at the same elevation in Bhutan (Spiereburg 2005)
	Lohit	Wakro	May	2002	O	Dutta (2002)
	Lohit	Khupa	May	2013	O	Restlessly flying from perch to perch as if guarding a territory (Sharma et al. 2014)
	Dibang Valley	Dus Kilo	May	2018	P	This work
	Dibang Valley	Atunli	May	2018	P	This work
<b>Assam</b>	Tinsukia	Sadiya	–	Pre-1977	O	Godwin-Austen (1877)
	Cachar	Hylakandy (Barak Valley)	–	Pre-1892	S	In 1897, C.M. Inglis wrote about a specimen he got 'five years ago' (Inglis 1898a)
	Cachar	Chutla Beel, Kattal	October	1897	S	Collected by A.M. Primrose and presumably referenced in Inglis (1898b), and Baker (1901); the specimen is now housed in the Sofia Museum (Boev 1997)
	Cachar	Chutla Beel, Kattal	–	Pre-1901	O	A.M. Primrose apparently saw one in addition to the one he collected (Baker 1901)
	North Lakhimpur	In a small stream (=jan) of Dejoo River	April	1904	O	One sighting on 07 April, when the bird was not wary, and was probably not breeding (Stevens 1904)
	Cachar	Inner line RF	April	1988	O	Choudhury (2000). Anwaruddin Choudhury, <i>pers. comm.</i> , March 2020
	Karimganj	Makunda Christian Hospital	September	2013	P	Ismavel (2013)
<b>Manipur</b>	Tamenglong	Zeiland Lake	January	2001	O	Choudhury (2009)
<b>Meghalaya</b>	Jaintia Hills	Norpuh Block 1	April	1997	O	Choudhury (2000)
<b>Mizoram</b>	Siaha	Phura Village	April	2001	O	Birand & Pawar (2004)
	Mamit	Dampa Tiger Reserve	January	2013	P	Don (2013)
	Aizwal	Tlawng Road	April	2019	P	Sawant (2019)
<b>Nagaland</b>	Eastern Naga Hills, north of Manipur	–	–	Pre-1878	S	Godwin-Austen (1878), and location basis statement in Hume (1888)
<b>Tripura</b>	West Tripura	–	–	1991	O	Year deduced from the year of sampling (Majumdar et al. 2002)

Abbreviations: O=Observation; P=Photograph; S=Specimen.

\*A checklist compiled from Mishmi Hills and adjoining areas, includes this species, but the actual record is untraceable:

Website URL: [https://www.kolkatabirds.com/trip\\_reports/mishmitriplist.html](https://www.kolkatabirds.com/trip_reports/mishmitriplist.html)

Records of this bird from north-eastern India suggest its presence there, predominantly between April and May (n=10), whilst being tagged as a rare/occasional visitor. Other records are from January (n=2), and September–October (n=3); five records are missing the month information. Its presence here, being recorded mostly during spring and autumn, points to the possibility of passage migration given that its distribution range is not limited to India, and extends to adjoining Bangladesh, Myanmar, and China (Woodall & Kirwan 2020). Whether any of these birds breed in north-eastern India, as alluded by Sharma et al. (2014), is presently only a matter of conjecture.

All sightings have been in close proximity to sources of water, be it rivers or streams, which strengthen the inference that the bird chooses to be close to its foraging substrates.

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## Postcard from Mumbai—My garbage dump

It's one in the afternoon and bird life has slowed at my garbage dump in Chembur, Mumbai.

The dump, an elevated concrete structure with metal grating doors on the upper side, was built for everlasting life, as our wet waste disposal unit where wonderful life giving compost is born. It's a paradise for breeding insects: larvae, grubs of different shapes and sizes that crawl around while adults flit, fly, or jump; a lavish spread for insectivores and omnivores. Squeezed between a mango on one side and a large kamini on the other, amidst a plethora of potted plants, providing hiding space for man and others alike.

We are into the 56th day of the nationwide lockdown, hiding fearfully behind masks and doors, trying to escape from the dreaded Corona virus. Braving it out only for bare essentials. After dealing with all housework, we search the screens, our senses straining for news of a remedy, but alas!

During this period I decided to visit our garbage dump regularly. Am I scavenging too? Yes, maybe for some insight into our backyard's natural world where life goes on without much ado.

Armed with a camera I now spend many hours hiding behind plants to catch the latest, observing the relations between the denizens of this micro-habitat. Gradually the complex relationship between all the visitors, including myself, started to unravel and become apparent.

The metal grating allowed most birds through, but not crows. Yet crows hung around trying their luck, a fruit peel or other tasty bits and pieces could have been carelessly left outside. Invertebrate omnivores, they try everything, including harassing others who have salvaged a beak-full of food, like the mynahs or bulbuls. Two species of crow lurk here. Large-billed Crows, glistening in handsome black, are usually solitary, or in twos. They hold their ground even against a murder of four to five House Crows, who respectfully keep their distance. But House Crows

will try to unnerve their larger opponent who are comparatively slower and ponderous in their approach. I found my presence kept the crows of all hues at a distance. This threw open the gates for the others.

Mynahs and the Red-vented Bulbuls pattered around fearlessly, diving into the depths of the dump. For the mynahs, getting in and out was difficult due to their size. On one occasion I saw a mynah struggling to escape from the inside, as I approached with stuff to add to the rotting heap. Mynahs were careful in my presence, but bulbuls were nonchalant. Their interest in this space has been, at best, occasional. The absence of crows and the presence of mynahs and bulbuls seemed a cue for the Magpie-Robin to swoop in, chasing all away.

The Magpie-Robin seems a paradoxical mixture of aggression and shyness, firmly chasing away all other birds, but scooting at the mere glimpse of me or the camera. With the progress of time, I am allowed a little more access, but only a wee bit more. The magpie-robins have also been in song, as males chase each other, or occupy vantage points, singing lovely courtship serenades. On occasions they have been seen collecting sticks or carrying food, hopefully for a waiting brood.

Under my gaze the doors open for Tickell's Flycatcher. In the early days, until the tenth of April, it scrapped with a female Paradise Flycatcher, and then later jostled with Fan-tailed Flycatchers. The Tickell's is built in the style of a thickset boxer of the flycatcher world. Flashily dressed in a hoodie of shimmering blue-grey, from head to tail, and a rich rufous apron from chin to mid-abdomen, even though its sweet metallic notes belie aggression. It's hunting strategy is to sit still and then erupt into a quick short sally to capture its prey. A success rate of one in five dives seems pretty good. As time progressed I realized that I was actually seeing Mr. and Mrs. Tickell's Flycatcher. It was great to catch them displaying on a couple of occasions, within a few feet of where I sat. Unfortunately I did not see any signs of their